

# HONORING VIETNAM VETERANS AND NORTH DAKOTA'S SOLDIERS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES IN VIETNAM

Ms. HEITKAMP. Mr. President, I rise today to continue our efforts to honor the 198 North Dakotans who gave their lives while serving in the Vietnam war.

Together with Bismarck High School's 11th graders and their teachers, my office is reaching out to the families and friends of these fallen heroes to learn about their lives. I am humbled to learn the tidbits shared with us about each young man, and I wish I could dedicate a whole speech to each unique life.

Today, I also want to highlight the service and contributions to North Dakota and our country by my good friend Rick Maixner of Bismarck. Rick served as a Navy pilot during the Vietnam war, earning many distinguished medals for his aerial service. He then served the State of North Dakota as a State senator and member of the State house of representatives. In his forties, Rick earned his law degree. Throughout his career, he has always been a true public servant. I wish Rick a very happy 70th birthday.

Now I will share about the lives of some of the North Dakotans who did not come home from the Vietnam war.

JAMES FREIDT

James Freidt was from Grand Forks and was born May 5, 1947. He served in the Army's 1st Cavalry Division. James was 20 years old when he died on October 11, 1967.

James's father served our country during World War II and received a Purple Heart for his service.

James was one of 10 children and was one of three children in his family to die tragically.

His family and friends called him Jimmy and remember him as a very protective brother who was always smiling. The siblings have fond memories of playing games like kick the can together.

Shortly before beginning his tour of duty, James was able to attend one of his sisters' weddings. The family is grateful for that good memory of James. He was killed just over 1 month after arriving in Vietnam.

ROBERT "BOBBY" SCHMITZ

Robert "Bobby" Schmitz was from Martin and was born February 25, 1944. He served in the Army's 4th Infantry Division. Bobby was 25 years old when he died on September 16, 1969.

He was the oldest of six children. His father, Eugene, and a brother, Denny, also served our country in the Army. Growing up, Bobby helped his family with farming and their dairy cows. He and his brother, Denny, were both on the wrestling team. Bobby graduated from NDSU with a degree in business administration before serving in Vietnam. He was engaged to be married and was looking forward to starting his life with his fiancée after he completed his service.

LOREN "DOUG" HAGEN

Loren "Doug" Hagen was born in Fargo on February 25, 1946. He served as a Green Beret in the Army Special Forces. On August 7, 1971, Doug died. He was 25 years old.

Doug was the eldest of three sons. He was an Eagle Scout and an honor student. After graduating from NDSU with a degree in engineering, Doug enlisted in the Army. His goal was to find his best friend from high school, who had gone missing in action 2 years prior.

Doug was killed 2 weeks into his second tour of duty, which was 1 week prior to his being promoted to captain.

Doug was awarded the Medal of Honor for extraordinary heroism for his actions trying to rescue his fellow soldiers on the day he died. His Medal of Honor was presented to his father by President Gerald Ford at the White House in 1974.

Last month, the American Legion Post 308 was created in West Fargo and was named the Loren "Doug" Hagen Post in his honor.

I am grateful to Jordan Haluzak, Jasmine Nice, Brady Bieber, and Alex Love of Bismarck High School for sharing with us about Doug and his family. Jordan is related to Doug and is learning more about his family tree through this project.

MICHAEL HIMMERICK

Michael Himmerick was from Valley City and was born November 28, 1947. He served as a Navy medic for a group of 100 marines. Michael died on April 6, 1967. He was 19 years old.

Michael was one of four boys, and two of his brothers also served in the Navy. His family called him Mickey, and the marines he served with called him Doc. His bother Jim says Michael was one heck of a ballplayer. He was scouted by four Major League Baseball teams when he was a sophomore in high school, but he threw his arm out the summer after his junior year.

Jim remembers Michael's plans to put his intelligence and military experience to good use to become a doctor after completing his service.

LARRY SIKORSKI

Larry Sikorski was from Fairmount and was born April 1, 1947. He served in the Marine Corps' Hotel Battery, 3rd Battalion, 12th Marines. Larry died on February 25, 1969. He was 21 years old.

He had two sisters, Yvonne and Arlene. He had four brothers, Chet, Richard, Daniel, and Orrin—all of whom served our country in the U.S. military.

Larry's nephew Dale was just 1 year younger than Larry. He cherishes his memories of building a raft together, just like Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer. They spent 3 days together building it, but, unfortunately, once sent into the river, the raft did not float.

Dale remembers Larry as being outgoing and very intelligent. Larry earned straight A's while studying pre dentistry at the University of North Dakota before enlisting in the Marines.

Before going to Vietnam, when Dale dropped Larry off at the airport, Larry told Dale he would never see him again.

RICHARD "JIMMY" GAFFNEY, JR.

Richard "Jimmy" Gaffney, Jr., was from Fargo. He was born October 23, 1948. He served in the Marine Corps' Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines. Jimmy died on July 13, 1968. He was 19 years old.

Jimmy enlisted in the Marine Corps shortly after he graduated from Fargo Central High School in 1966. During his first 13-month tour of duty in Vietnam, he was promoted to the rank of corporal.

In letters he mailed to his family, Jimmy wrote that he had made a lot of good friends in his fellow soldiers. When his first tour came to an end, Jimmy signed up for a second tour. Shortly after starting his second tour of duty, he was killed by a land mine.

RICHARD VOLK

Richard Volk was from Minot. He was born March 20, 1949. He served in the Marine Corps' Echo Battery, 2nd Battalion, 12th Marines. Richard died on March 19, 1969, the day before his 20th birthday.

Richard was one of 11 children. Three of the four sons in his family served our country in the military. At one point, Richard and his older brother, Stephen, were both serving in Vietnam at the same time.

Richard was a hard worker, working on the Soo Line Railroad and at his brother-in-law's restaurant, the Pantry Cafe. His brother Virgil remembers that Richard loved hunting and fishing. Virgil said Richard was the best looking in the family, and he knew it.

ROGER SVIR

Roger Svir was from Park River and was born December 1, 1950. He served in the Army's 1099th Transportation Company, called the River Rats. Roger died on September 26, 1971. He was 20 years old.

He was the oldest of four children. His father and seven uncles served our country in World War II and Korea.

During high school, Roger worked for a potato farmer and shared his earnings with his mother Virginia. His mother cherishes her memories of Roger and his cousin playing together along the river and of Roger fixing his car.

He had plans to buy a piece of land with his father and start their own farm. After Roger died, his father thought he was too old to start farming alone, and he gave up on the dream.

Roger was proud to hold the same position as an Army River Rat ship fitter that his father held during World War II.

WILLIS WEBER

Willis Weber was from Valley City and was born July 1, 1937. He served in the Army's 1st Infantry Division. His regiment was called the Blue Spaders of the Big Red One. Willis was 28 years old when he died on November 11, 1965.

At College High School in Valley City, his friends called him Willie. He participated in journalism, printing, basketball, football, and intramural sports.

Prior to his Army service, Willis served in the Air Force and in the Valley City Police Department.

Three weeks after arriving in Vietnam, Willis was shot, and he died a few days after because of that injury. He was awarded six medals in recognition for his actions while serving in Vietnam.

The Valley City AMVETS Post 3 and the Auxiliary are named after Willis in honor of his service and sacrifice to his country.

I want to thank Woody Wendt, a charter member of the Willis Weber AMVETS Post, Sarah Lerud, and Wes Anderson—all of Valley City—for sharing these details of Willis' life.

EDWARD ALEC WERMAN

Edward Alec Werman was from Hansel and was born April 11, 1938. He served with the Green Berets in the Army's Special Forces. Edward was 33 years old when he died on June 1, 1971.

In addition to his parents and five siblings, he left behind his wife Nancy, his daughter Robin, and his son Alec.

His sister Linda remembers Edward as a hard worker who loved his children. His daughter Robin loved traveling as a child with her family to places such as Myrtle Beach and Washington, DC.

Edward became a captain in the Army after attending West Point. He served two tours of duty in Vietnam and died when the helicopter he was in crashed and burned.

STEVE ESCALLIER

Steve Escallier enlisted while living in Portal and was born February 13, 1950. He served in the Army's 1st Cavalry Division. Steve died on October 31, 1969. He was 19 years old.

Steve's siblings remember him as an exceptional brother with good looks and long eyelashes. He held closely the Native American values of truth, life, family, and God. Steve was a firm believer in the United States and the obligation to help those who asked, so he chose to enlist. He had plans to become a teacher after completing his service.

Steve's sister Elyse believes the whole town where they lived in California mourned Steve's death. It took the family years after his death to be able to say "Vietnam" and even longer to be able to say Steve's name.

STEVEN HANSON

Steven Hanson spent his early childhood in Aneta and was born October 27, 1949. He served in the Army's 101st Airborne Division. Steve died on September 24, 1971. He was 21 years old.

His family and friends called him Steve. While growing up, Steven's father Gordon served as a Lutheran pastor in the small town of Dazey, and the family traveled all over the world with his father's work as an Army chaplain.

Steven's younger brother by 10 years, David, tells of a letter the family re-

ceived from a fellow soldier whose life Steven saved the day he died.

The letter described Steven as the pilot of his helicopter crew of four soldiers. Steven's helicopter was shot down, but he was able to guide it to a semicontrolled crash landing. A fellow pilot of Steven's also had survived a recent crash, and Steven was heard joking on the radio to tell so-and-so that he now has safely landed one, too.

One of his crew members was pinned under the helicopter and injured, so Steven helped to free him and called the evacuation helicopter. Later, a second chopper came and dropped down the cable to take Steven and his crewman to safety, but they were drawing fire, and the cable gave way. Steven fell 100 feet to his death.

In addition to his parents and siblings, Steven left behind a wife and son.

LEON COX

Leon Cox was from Jamestown and was born May 4, 1934. He enlisted in the Army's 1st Infantry Division. Leon was 35 years old when he died on May 17, 1969.

Leon, or "Fuzzy," as he was affectionately called by his family, was the seventh of 12 children. Leon grew up in a family dedicated to serving our country. His father served in World War I; two brothers, John and Alex, served in World War II; and two other brothers, Donnie and Jim, served in Korea.

Leon made a career out of his military service. During his senior year of high school, he joined the National Guard and was deployed to Korea. After returning from his deployment, he joined the Army and was stationed in Germany, where he and his wife adopted a young girl named Nicolette.

Leon's family remembers him as a proud man who believed in his country.

GUNDER GUNDERSON

Gunder Gunderson was from Walhalla and was born on July 25, 1941. He served in the Army's 1st Cavalry Division. Gunder was 24 years old when he died on November 23, 1965.

His fellow platoon soldier, Paul Guglietta, says that it was an honor to serve in the same platoon as Sergeant Gunderson. Paul remembers Gunder as being dedicated, hard-working, and very intelligent. He always drove himself to improve on everything he did. Paul was injured at the same time Gunder was killed and says that Gunder was a brave and courageous soldier.

ROY WAGNER

Roy Wagner was from Bismarck and was born February 23, 1947. He served in the Army's 1st Infantry Division. Roy died October 2, 1967, at the age of 20.

When Roy's brother Toby was drafted, Roy decided to enlist. When the draft board met the brothers together, they decided that Toby should go home because he had a wife and kids. Roy was more than happy to take Toby's place.

While in Vietnam, Roy met a young Vietnamese boy whose parents had been killed in the conflict. It was Roy's intention to adopt the boy once he married his fiancée while on leave, but Roy was killed before he could marry his sweetheart or adopt the boy.

The day he died, Roy was in the field with five other soldiers. The group was led into a tunnel and ambushed. Three of the men were shot, and Roy knew that he needed to buy them some time. He stood at the front of the group shooting at the enemy until all of the other men got out. He took seven bullets, saved all five men, and lost his life that day. All five men later contacted the family to tell them of Roy's self-sacrifice.

The AMVETS post in Bismarck is named after Roy to honor his service and his sacrifice.

I wish to thank Bismarck High School students Kyra Wetzel and Hunter Lauer for sharing their research about Roy Wagner with us.

These are just a few of the brave men who served our country in Vietnam. As we are now experiencing the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam war, commemorated by an official proclamation by the President, I think it is important that we honor those who were killed in action and that we share their stories with the next generation of North Dakotans, the next generation of Americans, so they can truly appreciate the sacrifice of those who served us in the U.S. military and certainly the sacrifice which gave the last great measure of their lives.

I thank the Presiding Officer and yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mrs. ERNST). Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### FREEDOM FOR BOB LEVINSON

Mr. NELSON. Madam President, at 5:30 p.m. today, we are going to vote on S. Con. Res. 16, which calls on the Government of Iran to release Americans who are being held. It also calls on the government to cooperate in finding, locating, and ultimately releasing Bob Levinson.

Robert Levinson, a retired FBI agent, while visiting the tourist Island of Kish in the Persian Gulf, which is a part of Iran, suddenly disappeared in 2007. It has been 8 years since his disappearance, which occurred on March 9, 2007. Since Bob is a part of this resolution, this is just another of a continuing conversation this Senator from Florida has had over the course of the last 8 years. It is unbelievable that it has been 8 years.

It wasn't until 2010—3½ years after his disappearance—that the Levinson